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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 1982, the Metropolitan Community Colleges' Homesharing Project has helped hundreds of people who have space in their homes to share to link up with people who need places to live. The Homesharing Project involves the following: (1) a person who is interested in sharing his/her home calls for information about the program; (2) a questionnaire and information is sent to the homeowner by a project staff member; (3) interviews are held with interested homeowners (in the home) and homeseekers (in the office); (4) during the interviews, each party is asked what he/she can offer (e.g., space, help with bills or chores, and home maintenance); (5) participants are matched on the basis of location, transportation, and financial requirements; (6) interested homeowners are introduced to potential homesharers; (7) if the parties agree, they sign a Homesharing Agreement Statement and a Non-Liability Contract, and the homesharer moves in at the time specified by the homeowner; and (8) the project staff make themselves available for consultation and follow-up interviews as needed. During the first 2 years of the project, 2,849 people applied for participation in the project, 1,541 interviews were conducted, and 285 matches involving 640 people were completed. The success rate of the homesharing arrangements was approximately 65%. This descriptive report includes information on project funding, staffing, governance, and media support, as well as copies of the "Should I House Share?" questionnaires for homeowner and homesharer respectively, and lists of the steps involved in linking homesharers. (LAL)

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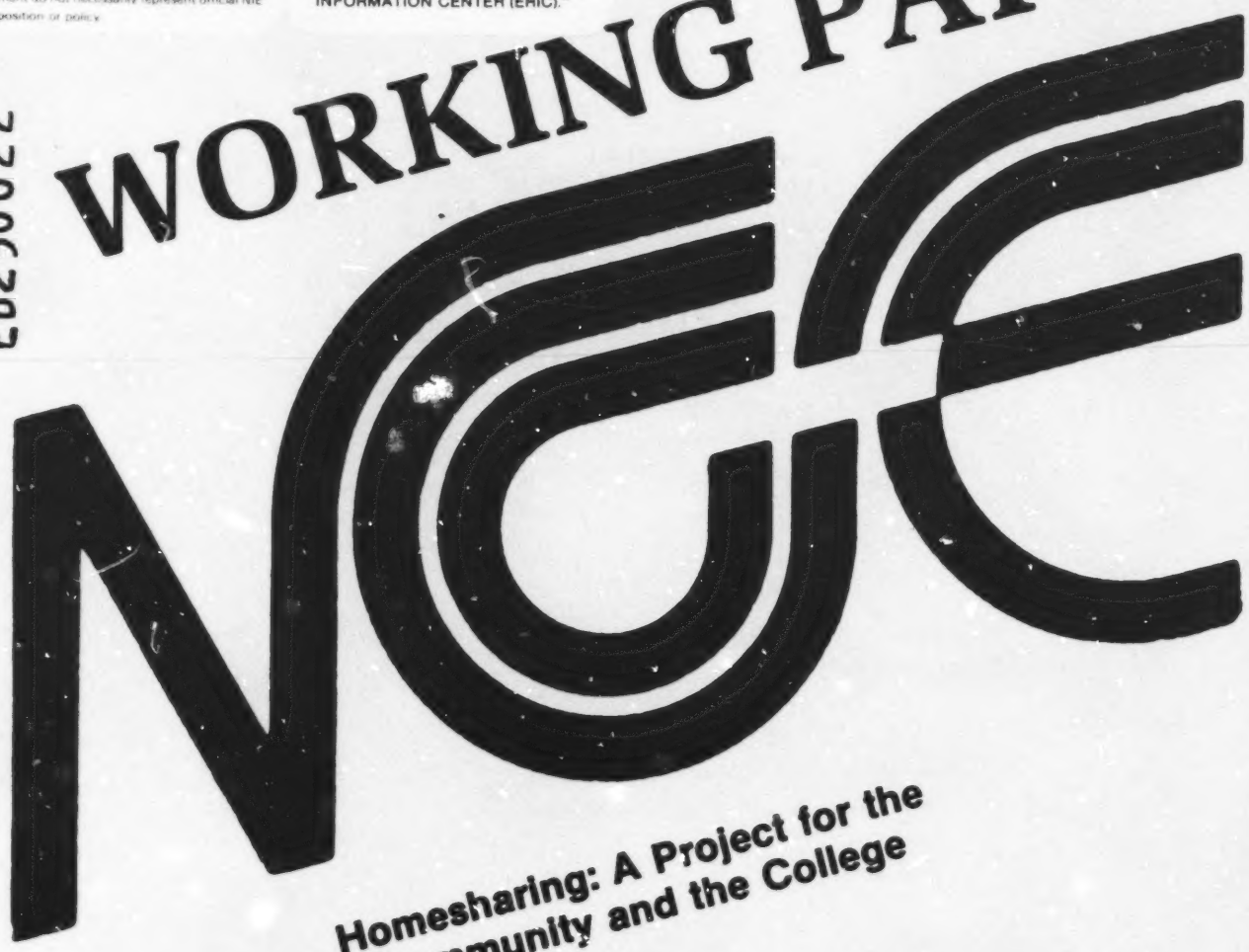

Homesharing: A Project for the Community and the College

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NCCSCE *Working Papers* Series

The *Working Papers Series* provides practitioners with information on programs and processes which they may adapt to their own needs. Each previous *Paper* has dealt with a program or service developed at a single institution which illustrated one educational approach to meeting a particular need.

This *Working Paper* describes a carefully developed homesharing program which meets a significant community need. Information is available from the Homesharing Project at the Metropolitan Community Colleges, where the program was developed. The *Working Paper* discusses the development process and the original program and describes effective uses of this program in various settings. The editor and the author encourage readers to utilize these materials with adjustments to fit their particular circumstances and to share their experiences with the author and the NCCSCE membership.

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Homesharing: A Project for the Community and the College

A. Rae Price, Ph.D.

Homesharing

Imagine a program that makes it possible for:

- the basketball coach to recruit students from small towns by offering them a comfortable place to live at very low cost;
- the nursing faculty to encourage older women with children to enroll because younger students can be found who can live in and help with the chores;
- a voter above the age of 64 to make the remark that "I've been supporting the community colleges for a long time, and this is the first time there's ever been anything in it for me."

The Homesharing Project in metropolitan Kansas City has made those things possible and much, much more. Since its inception two years ago, it has proven its worth in the greater Kansas City area. Quite selfishly, it has given a lot of publicity to the community colleges, and, unselfishly, it has improved the lives of several hundred people. "Homesharing" means helping people who have space in their homes to share, link up with people who need places to live.

At the outset of the project, a typical match was between a widow in her 70s and a college student in his or her late 20s. Today, however, no typical match exists. Many older widows have found freedom from fear and help with utility costs through being matched with younger students. In addition, however, a young working couple has been matched with an older man who was lonely and yet who could contribute financially, plus do some child caring for the young people. Because of confidence in the program, stemming from the careful screening of persons seeking to be homesharers, a wide variety of people are coming to the community college for assistance through the Homesharing Project.

How Homesharing Works

1. A person who would like to share his or her home, or a person seeking a place to live, calls the Homesharing office for information about the program.

2. Staff members send out a questionnaire, "Should I Homeshare?" and some information about the program.

3. If the person is interested, he or she calls the Homesharing office for an appointment.
   a. For the homeowner, an interview is set up in the home, usually between a volunteer in the program and the homeowner.
   b. For the homeseeker, an interview is set up with a professionally-trained staff person in the Homesharing office.

At the time of the interview, each party is asked what he or she can offer to homesharing: space, companionship, help with utility bills and/or domestic chores, shopping, home maintenance, gardening, and so forth.

4. If a potential candidate for homesharing is still interested and is qualified to participate in the program — that is, either has a home that someone would want to share, or is a person with whom someone else would want to live — then the matching process begins. Staff members go over the more obvious matching criteria, such as location, transportation, and financial requirements, looking for potential matches. It is like a game: With so many combinations to be examined, the placing together of a homesharer and homeseeker resembles fitting together pieces of a puzzle.

5. When a potential homeseeker is identified, the homeowner is told about that person and asked whether that homeowner would like to meet the potential sharer. In that meeting between potential homesharers, a volunteer is often present, along with, at times, a member of the Homesharing staff.

6. If the parties agree, they each sign a Homesharing Agreement Statement and a Non-Liability Contract, and the homeseeker moves in at the time specified by the homeowner. (NOTE: particularly important is the recognition that the homeowner is in control. It *is* his or her home; that fact is uppermost. Having *in writing* what each party is to contribute to the match helps reduce conflict and misunderstanding.)

7. Once the match between homeowner and homeseeker is made, the homesharing staff is available for consultation and followup interviews, as needed. If either party wishes to terminate the match prior to the projected termination date, the homesharing staff can assist in terminating — and in rematching when desired, as often is the case.

Two Year Project Result

As the project has developed in Kansas City, two important additions have occurred. Offices have been opened in two suburban areas, and computer terminals are being placed in the three offices for continual sharing and updating of information about persons wishing to homeshare.

Figures gathered at the end of the second year of operation in the original Metropolitan Community Colleges (MCC) Homesharing Office, show that other changes are also taking place. While the number of inquiries about the program and the number of completed interviews both declined as compared with the first year, the number of completed matches increased. "We have no firm explanation for this," states Dr. Elizabeth Ossorio, second coordinator of the MCC Homesharing Office. "The most likely reason would seem to be that during the first year more inquiries turned out to be inappropriate. During the second year, as a result of public education, more people in the general public, as well as in other community agencies, made referrals that fit within the Homesharing Program. In addition, as the pool of potential sharers, householders, and homeseekers grows, chances for making an appropriate match improve."

The two-year progress report on Homesharing by Dr. Ossorio provides information on Homesharing's services, revenue, and budget during its first two years.

Table I shows the number of applicants, persons interviewed, and persons matched during the first two years of the project.

In the first two years, 640 people were matched, and 200 terminated — some successfully, some not so successfully. A "successful termination" means that the match lasted as long as was planned, until the end of a semester, for example, or until the homesharer went to a nursing home or, as has occasionally happened, died. About half of the homeseekers are college students, with students from 20 colleges in the area using the service. The preponderance of students come from the community colleges and the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

The percentage of successful matches, about 65 percent, exceeds that for successful marriages, about 50 percent currently. Perhaps the Homesharing screening process should be expanded to include engaged couples.

TABLE I

Homesharing Project
Metropolitan Community Colleges
Kansas City, Missouri
Service Data Summary

	1982	*1983*	*Total for Two Year Period*
Applications:			
Owners	743	699	1,412
Seekers	783	654	1,437
Totals:	1,526	1,323	2,849
Interviews:			
Owners	348	270	618
Seekers	479	444	923
Totals:	827	714	1,541
Matches Completed:	138	147	285
Persons in Matches:	268	372	640

Funding

The Metropolitan Community Colleges have provided the base of operations for the original Homesharing Office. Funding for the staff has been made available by a bank and by local foundations. Homesharing is an idea that has met its time in terms of the present rising utility costs, high crime rates, longer life spans, and the isolation that comes with aging. Funding agencies recognize this and open their coffers accordingly.

Table II shows the funding sources for the July 1, 1984 to June 30, 1985 fiscal year for the original, Metropolitan Community Colleges office only.

TABLE II

Homesharing Funding
July 1, 1984 - June 30, 1985
Original Homesharing Office, Metropolitan Community Colleges

Assured Funding	
Local Foundations	$25,000
Heart of American United Way	5,000
Junior League of Kansas City, MO (Plus one-time donation for computer and software, totalling $7,202)	16,347
Carry over from Fiscal 1983-84	4,059
Project Income	
Program fees, sale of start-up kits, video tape sale and rental	4,500
Interest income	3,000
"Pillars": corporation and individual donations	5,221
"The Human Race" special project	500
Total	$63,627

A planning committee for long-range funding of the project is made up of original funders' representatives, staffs of the three offices, and volunteers on the project. The committee is presently working on a five-year plan for funding. Although homesharers do pay some of the costs of the matching process—$5 at the time of the interview and $10 at the time of the match—the program will never be self-supporting. At present, less than 8 percent of the project's cost is raised through match fees and program services. The long-range planning committee recognizes that some kind of Homesharing fundraising effort may be necessary. However, staff and volunteer time required by such an effort would cut seriously into the time now spent in interviewing, matching, and following up matches.

A balance is being sought between philanthropic support, client fees, public services such as rental of a Homesharing videocassette, and a fund-raising project or projects. Homesharing is fortunate to have the Colleges' support to ease the financial burden of running the project.

Table III shows the budget for the same period, fiscal year 1984-1985, for the original Homesharing Office at the Metropolitan Community Colleges.

TABLE III
Homesharing Budget
July 1, 1984 - June 30, 1985
Original Homesharing Office, Metropolitan Community Colleges

Staff Salaries	$49,644
Staff Benefits	9,183
Supplies	1,150
Copying & Printing	2,150
Mileage	500
Consulting	1,000
Total	$63,627
In-Kind Support from Metropolitan Community Colleges:	$23,986
Administrative Costs	
Occupancy	
Telephone	
Office Equipment	
Postage	

Staffing

The original Homesharing Office was staffed with one person; a second was soon added. The present three offices, spread throughout the greater Kansas City area, have a total of one full-time project director, two full-time and four part-time staff persons, a volunteer director of volunteers, and from 30 to 40 active volunteers. Without the volunteers, whose primary training and assignments are in screening homeowners in their own homes, the Homesharing Project could not operate.

Because screening homeseekers, those wanting to live in someone else's home, is the most critical part of the interviewing process, professionally-trained personnel undertake that task. Thus each Homesharing Office must have at least one part-time professional person available to screen and check references on homeseekers.

Governance

Working with three Homesharing offices, each with its own board structure, has presented a challenge in governance. Each of the boards is ultimately the entity which could be sued in case of litigation (highly doubtful, but possible in spite of signatures on the Non-Liability Agreement); hence each board is obviously going to be involved in policy setting for Homesharing.

A coordinating committee has been established, with a representative from each of the governing boards: the Community Research and Development Board in Independence, Missouri, which sponsors the eastern suburbs' Homesharing Office; the Metropolitan Community Colleges' Board

which governs the original and central Homesharing Office; and the United Community Services-Retired Seniors Volunteer Program Board which is responsible for the western suburbs' Homesharing Office. Such cooperation between diverse community agencies provides an additional strength for the Homesharing Project, just as having the Colleges' support for the original office provided the original source of strength.

Media Support and Other Public Information Sources

Through the *Kansas City Star-Times*, radio stations and television stations, Homesharing has received wide coverage. Newspapers in outlying areas frequently pick up stories about Homesharing. Since Homesharing has, by its very nature, human interest stories about changes in lives of old and young, it lends itself to media coverage.

The Homesharing Office instituted a quarterly newsletter, plus a "Homesharing Works" flyer for funders, volunteers, and other interested people. The bimonthly "Homesharing Works" flyer highlights two matches between homesharer and homeowner that typify the success stories in the project. Whenever possible, the Homesharing story is taken by staff and volunteers to conferences, workshops, fairs, and seminars on aging and health. Because of a local public radio story, National Public Radio picked up Homesharing for "All Things Considered," its late afternoon program. Calls came in from around the country requesting information about how to start a Homesharing project.

For More Information

The Homesharing Office at the Metropolitan Community Colleges can provide a packet of information about the Homesharing Project. The cost for this material is $7.50. In addition, two videocassettes are available about the Project: one is an introductory cassette and the other provides more detail, particularly about staffing and volunteers. The shorter cassette (8 minutes) rents for $17.50 and the longer one (20 minutes) for $20.00, with $12.50 returned to the renter upon return of the rented material. For further information, write or call:

The Homesharing Project - Penn Valley Office
Metropolitan Community Colleges
3201 Southwest Trafficway
Kansas City, MO 64111
(913) 932-7600

APPENDIX A
SHOULD I HOUSE SHARE?

HOUSEHOLDER

1. House
   - Is my home suitable for sharing?
   - How many homesharers would I like to have?
   - Would any alterations be necessary to my house in order to accommodate homesharers?

2. Contribution
   - How much help with my housing expenses do I have to reduce my housing cost burden?
   - What things can I contribute besides space (e.g. cooking, housework, gardening . . .)?

3. Lifestyle/Housemate(s)
   - Do I want to share my kitchen, living room, and other common spaces? At what times?
   - What private space do I have available for the sharer?
   - What will I expect regarding shared bathroom facilities?

4. What is essential to me in a homesharing situation?
   - Companionship?
   - Help with tasks or activities?
   - Help with utility bills?
   - Pets/no pets?
   - Drinker/non-drinker?
   - Smoker/non-smoker?
   - Quiet environment?
   - Other?

5. What needs would homesharing meet for me?

6. Questions and other comments (Jot down things you want to discuss with the interviewer from the Homesharing Project.)

Questionnaire excerpted from *Intergenerational House-Sharing: A Research Report and Resource Manual* by Stephen R. McConnell and Carolyn E. Usher, 1980, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, D. C. Heath and Co. Copyright 1980 by Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center. Reprinted by permission.

SHOULD I HOUSE SHARE?

HOMESHARER

1. Location — What are my needs regarding location (e.g., public transportation, stores, schools . . .)?

2. Contribution — What things can I contribute to a householder (e.g., housework, driving, gardening, cooking, shared utilities' expenses, house sitting . . .)?

3. Lifestyle/Housemate(s) — What are my needs for both privacy and sociability?
   Do I want to cook together, share the house's common common spaces (i.e., living room), share daily activities and companionship?
   Am I willing to control use of stereo, TV?

4. What is essential to me in a homesharing situation?
   A companion with whom to share activities?
   Pets/no pets?
   Drinker/non-drinker?
   Smoker/non-smoker?
   Quiet environment?
   A place for my furniture and belongings?
   Other?

5. What needs would homesharing meet for me?

6. Questions and other comments (Jot down things you want to discuss with the interviewer at the Homesharing Office.)

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APPENDIX B
STEPS IN LINKING UP HOMESHARERS

HOUSEHOLDER

1. Registration form filled out by householder and returned with $5 enrollment fee to Homesharing Project office.
2. Staff set appointment time with householder for home interview.
3. Interviewer comes to home. Discussion of what is needed, wanted, shared: space, services, financial requirements and contributions. Householder provides references. Informal statement signed absolving MCC District from liability.
4. Information obtained from householder during interview is matched with information about homeseeker applicants on file in office.

   IT MAY TAKE TIME TO FIND A LIKELY PERSON

5. Staff calls householder, provides some information about potential homesharer, supplies homeseeker's references to householder. Asks whether "OK" to give householder's name and phone number to this person. If yes . . . .
6. Homeseeker will call householder, set up appointment for preliminary visit(s) to talk about their needs, expectations. If partners like each other . . . .
7. Set up meeting to negotiate written agreement between householder and homeseeker. Experience has taught us that such an agreement is most important to successful homesharing. A Homesharing representative is available to help work out the agreement. It is filed in the Homesharing office for use should questions arise later. Both parties may want to renegotiate the agreement after a few weeks or months, or as circumstances (jobs, health, etc.) change for one or the other partner.
8. At the same meeting where the agreement to share the home is reached, householder and homesharer also sign a formal agreement not to hold the MCC District liable for any problems that may arise as a result of sharing the home. A $10 "match fee" for both the homeowner and homesharer is requested at this time, and should be mailed with the agreements.
9. Three weeks after homesharer moves in, a Homesharing staff person contacts the householder to ask about satisfaction or problems with the match.
10. Staff remain available at all times to share joys and problems and to provide consultation if desired.

STEPS IN LINKING UP HOMESHARERS

HOMESEEKER

1. Homeseeker given office appointment for interview, to fill out application, supply references, and pay $5 enrollment fee.
2. Discussion of what is needed, wanted, shared: space, services, financial requirements and contributions. Informal statement signed absolving MCC District from liability.
3. Information obtained from homeseeker during interview is matched with information about householder applicants on file in office.

   IT MAY TAKE TIME TO FIND A LIKELY PLACEMENT

4. Staff calls homeseeker, provides information about householder interested in talking to him/her. If homeseeker interested, householder's name and phone number are provided.
5. Homeseeker will call householder, set up appointment for preliminary visit(s) to talk about their needs, expectations. If partners like each other . . . .
6. Set up meeting to negotiate written agreement between householder and homesharer. Experience has taught us that such an agreement is most important to successful homesharing. A Homesharing representative is available to help work out the agreement. It is filed in the Homesharing office for use should questions arise later. Both parties may want to renegotiate the agreement after a few weeks or months, or as circumstances (jobs, health, etc.) change for one or the other partner.
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